Rabbits, Therapy and Placebos

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Rabbits, Therapy and Placebos

by Azure_K_Mello

Summary

Will finally meets a shrink who might actually help him deal with his mental problems. And Hannibal asks him for a little bit of honesty.

Notes

This story makes references to Hannibal Rising.

See the end of the work for more notes

Will was leaving class when his cell phone rang. He prayed it wasn't Jack. He only had four more days until his dad came and he really didn't want to go on a case. He hadn't heard from BAU since before the snowstorm and today was supposed to be his first appointment with Mort. He looked at the screen and was relieved to see it was Hannibal. He picked up saying, "You have no idea how pleased I am that you aren't Jack."

Hannibal laughed, "You're seeing Mort this afternoon, correct?"

"I am. I'm cautiously excited."

"Good," said Hannibal and he sounded pleased. "His office is quite close to my house. Would you like to come over for dinner? I saw the most beautiful rabbits at the market today. Do you like rabbit?"

"It really depends on how much shot is still in it. I like it if I don't damage my teeth my dad used to make rabbit stew."

"These are farm raised so there's no shot in the meat."

"Then I'm sure I'll love it."

"It's not too weird a meat?"

"No, not at all," Will shook his head as he started toward the back exit of the building. "My appointment is at six."

"Excellent, I'll see you after seven."

Will hung up and almost ran into Alana. He smiled at her, feeling happy about his dinner plans and said, "I haven't seen you since the snowstorm. Did the beer and chocolate last you all the way to the end?"

"No, I ran out of chocolate. Did you and Hannibal get sick of each other?"

"No, we ran out of milk on the last day and were boiling water to give ourselves faux bathes but we stayed friends."

"Hannibal taking a faux bath? I can't imagine that."

"Thank God for fire places, right? If we'd been cold it wouldn't have been as bearable."

"I barely left my hearth."

"I should go," said Will. He looked at his watch, "I don't mean to rush but I need to feed and walk the dogs, take a shower and my pills and go to a therapy appointment."

"Oh, I thought you and Hannibal weren't doing that anymore."

"We're not it's someone he knows: Mort Jacobs."

Alana looked confused, “Really? I thought Hannibal thought he was a hack.” Then she seemed to consider it. “Actually, Hannibal thinks he’s a terrible psychoanalyst and a great therapist.”

“I don’t like psychoanalysis,” said Will.

Alana seemed to still be considering it, “I think Mort is perfect for you. I never would have even considered it. He’s really into meditation and positive personal catechisms. I think he might be great for you.”

“I hope so,” said Will. “I really hate psychoanalysis.”

“He isn’t into psychoanalysis.”

“Good,” said Will. “I should go.”

“Go, I’ll talk to you soon.”

“Lunch tomorrow?” asked Will. “I’ll bring sandwiches?”

“Sounds good,” she nodded.

He moved past her and down the hall, needing to use his card to swipe himself out of the building and he nodded to the guards posted outside before he walked home. It was chilly but not really cold and spring was on the air. He sighed happily as he walked. It only took fifteen minutes to get to his house. And there, when he opened the door, the dogs instantly came to him. He caressed them and asked after their days, he asked them if they were good dogs, if they were beautiful dogs and — if the attention they lavished upon him was any indication — they were great dogs. “Are you guys hungry for dinner? Are you? Yeah? Okay, let’s get you some dinner. Yeah, I missed you too, yeah. Yeah, you’re my favorites too.” He stood and brushed past them, needing to step over Harry to get inside. Their water bowls were still fine but Will filled their food bowls. He poured himself a glass of lemonade ice tea and watched them. He changed out of his work clothes and into jeans as they ate.

Once they were done they went out to tromp around the fields. The snow was melting and the dogs were getting muddy. So in the end he had to give them all quick baths on the porch. Hot water, hot dogs and cool air made Will break a sweat. He patted them dry as there was no time to blow-dry them. And he said, “Guys, be good. I gotta shower.” He washed quickly but once he was out he couldn’t figure out what to wear. What do you wear to a shrink when you haven’t met him before? Will wasn’t sure how formal the man was but if he had a dog in the office he couldn’t be that formal. He settled on jeans and his comfy oatmeal sweater. In the living room he said, “Okay, boys, I gotta go but I won’t be late. Love you.” He patted them all as he left.

Mort’s office was only two blocks from Hannibal’s office so Will knew the parking. He scanned the names on the office building’s board and went up to the second floor. Inside the office Will was surprised to see a woman at a desk. She smiled, “Hello.”

“Hi, I’m Will Graham.”

She introduced herself and gave him a clipboard. He gave her his insurance card and sat down with the clipboard. It was just about medication and his sleeping patterns. He'd brought his fMRI results for the doctor to look at. A short, balding man came out and smiled, "Will?"

"Mort?" he asked as he stood.

The man nodded. He said, "Would you like to come in? I have a dog but Dr. Lecter said you like dogs, right?"

"I have seven dogs," said Will.

"Oh good, she's a little friendly."

"I'm really friendly with dogs. I don't touch people, really, I don't like touching people but I can't keep my hands to myself when there are dogs."

"She'll love that." He showed him into a room and there was a border collie waiting.

"Hi," Will said to her, "Hi. What's your name?"

"Will, this is Holly. Holly, meet Will." Will patted her head and it was clear that they were going to be best friends forever from the way she pushed herself against his palm. "Dr. Lecter was right. He said you'd fall in love with each other."

Will looked at the man and said, "Do you have a very formal relationship or are you calling Hannibal 'Dr. Lecter' because you think I'm his patient?" He turned back to the dog. She turned her head to lick the palm of his hand.

Mort sounded confused and said, "I was under the impression that this was a referral?"

Will shook his head at the man, "While we were stuck in my house during that huge snowstorm last week, eating cookies he made, we talked about what I would want in a shrink if I was to go to a shrink. He thinks you're perfect. Part of it was that you love dogs." He straightened up and held out the clipboard and his brain scans. "Hannibal said he would give you my mental health history and my neurologist said she'd send over the stuff about my encephalitis? I brought my last fMRI. Every time I go to see a doctor for a physical they make me get another one."

"Yes, they both did. And Hannibal told me about your custody agreement with your father. He said you asked him to." Will nodded and Mort pointed to the couch. "Please sit down and thank you for these," he pointed at the fMRI pictures. He started to read through everything and didn't look up as he said, "So you were being treated by Hannibal at one point?"

Will nodded as he sat down. Holly climbed up to be next to him and rested her head on his lap. "For about a month. We were friends, then it looked like I was having a mental breakdown and he was my doctor, then he nursed me though the worst of my brain swelling and then he went back to just being my friend. Hence the fact that he got snowed into my house for four days. Poor Hannibal was stuck with seven dogs and no power for days. Thank

God I have a piano otherwise he would have been insufferable. As it was we actually had a pretty good time." He scratched behind Holly's ears.

Mort nodded and looked up with a smile, "I can't imagine spending that much time with Hannibal. I like him but I find him hard work. It's a lot of standing up straight and minding your Ps and Qs."

"That's the nice thing about having a personality disorder: I'm so bad at manners I just gave up on them. Hannibal is one of the only people I'm actually comfortable around."

"I see, that's good, that you have someone. Do you have many friends?"

"No, just Hannibal, Abigail Hobbs and Alana Bloom."

"Dr. Alana Bloom?"

"Yeah."

The man finally put aside the clipboard and said, "So, what are you looking to get out of therapy?"

"Tricks. I want to have an easier time." He told Mort what he'd told Hannibal. He didn't want psychoanalysis or drugs he just wanted some tricks.

"I am good with 'tricks' as you call them." He asked Will to tell him about his problems and listened attentively. He asked how Will was handling them. "Do you drink?"

Will shook his head, "No, alcoholism is a big problem in my family. Mostly I just cuddle my dogs and ask friendly psychiatrists to write notes saying I shouldn't be in the field."

"You shouldn't be in the field," the man said. "I'll write a letter. And do you take any sleep aids?"

"I did when the fever was bad. Now I just hope for the best."

With a nod Mort stood. "First trick I'm giving you: a placebo drug. Did you know that the placebo effect works even when someone is told it's a placebo?"

Will nodded, "Yeah, I knew that."

The man opened a locked cupboard and Will saw little bottles with labels, free sample of prescriptions. But, instead of taking one of those, Mort got a clear glass bottle that had an eyedropper stopper. "This is sugar water. Did your dad used to do something when you were little and couldn't sleep?"

"He used to give me chocolate milk."

"Can you stand chocolate milk?"

"It doesn't thrill me but I don't dislike it."

“Good, so when you can’t sleep,” he came back to his chair and sat across from Will, “make yourself a glass of chocolate milk and add a few drops of this.” He held the bottle out to Will. “Think about your dad’s old rituals, drink your milk and tell yourself that everything is okay. Then go to bed. And you see: you’ll sleep through the night. I can’t promise you won’t dream but you will sleep.”

“Really?”

“A calming ritual can do wonders. If you go to bed and are still awake more than twenty minutes later do the ritual. Don’t lie awake all night. Get up and shake your problems out with the ritual.”

Will accepted the bottle, “Thank you.”

“And, next, I want to walk you through a couple of breathing exercises.”

“Okay,” agreed Will.

They spent a half hour walking through different ways of breathing as Mort gave him a schedule for the exercises and Will paid attention. “Do you know why Hannibal made me think you were a referral instead of a friend?” Will shook his head. “Because he knew I would fit a referral into my schedule in a week whereas a friend would have had to have waited at least a few weeks. I think he was right to lie. You needed this.”

“Thank you for seeing me.” He patted Holly gently before they stood and went outside.

Mort gave him some papers and said, “These are for your dad. I give them to all my minors. You can fill them out but he needs to sign them.” They made an appointment for the day after Will’s dad left.

“I’m going to Hannibal’s for dinner. Want me to pass on any messages?”

“Yeah. Tell him that next time if he wants me to see a friend he should be more honest.”

Will smiled, “Sure.”

Mort handed him a card, “This has my cell phone. If you have any problems — if the breathing doesn’t work — just text me. You don’t even need to talk about it out loud.”

“Okay,” Will agreed. “Thank you, Mort.” The man didn’t try to shake his hand and Will said, “It was really great meeting you.”

The man smiled, “I’m going to help you with your problems and write that letter to the FBI.”

“Great,” said Will. He left feeling hopeful and happy. And he drove over to Hannibal’s house feeling good, positive.

When Hannibal opened the door he said, “You’re smiling.”

“You were right about Mort.”

Hannibal smiled at him, “Good. Come in. I was just about to baste the rabbit.”

Will followed him and took off his coat saying, “He says that in the future you shouldn’t lie and tell him that a friend is a referral.”

Hannibal laughed, “You know I thought this might be a comfort meal while you told me off for trying to set you up.”

“He gave me a placebo to help me sleep, he taught me some new breathing techniques and he gave me his cell phone number so we can text when we need to talk so that I don’t even need to talk him to him. He’s great. I think this might work.” Hannibal pulled a pan from the oven and the smell hit Will, “Wow, that smells amazing.”

“Roast rabbit with English roast potatoes, and roast beets, turnips and parsnips. A winter meal just in time to catch the tail end of the season.” He poured two glasses of red wine.

Accepting one easily, Will raised his glass in a silent toast. The talk turned toward work, the dogs, a book Hannibal had ordered and was eager to read, Will’s boat. Hannibal got bowls of olives, cut cheeses and brought different types of bread to the counter. He gestured at Will to sit at the counter and there they sat chatting as the smell of the roasting rabbit and vegetables. Will was having a great time and he said, “You have so many different modes, don’t you?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that Jack has told me about dinners here: you do five courses with wine pairings in the dining room and I’ve seen the dinner parties but Alana, Abigail and I see your kitchen.”

Hannibal shrugged, “We eat the main course in the dining room.” Then he smiled, “I’ve told you before: my kitchen is open to my friends. Jack is not my friend; he’s a colleague. You do not have much interest in wine. I like to please my guests; I like to please my friends even more. For Jack I do five courses with different wines for you I do a couple of courses perfectly and pair them with incredibly pleasant conversation. If we paired our discussions with pizza you’d be happy but that would not be true of Jack.”

“That’s true but the rabbit smells amazing and you wouldn’t eat delivered pizza.”

“I don’t trust assembly line food.” Between bites of cheese Hannibal said, “I’d like to cook for your father but I think you should tell him the truth.”

“That we’re just very good friends?”

“Exactly. When he was confused did you even consider us to be friends?”

“No, I had stopped disliking you but we really didn’t know each other.”

“So when he was happy because he thought you had a lover you couldn’t even correct him and say, ‘No, Hannibal is a close friend.’ You would have had to have said, ‘No, Hannibal is the psychiatrist Jack hired to keep an eye on me.’ I can certainly see why you would rather he think I was your lover than your shrink when he already worries about you. Now you can tell him the truth, that we’re friends and you have a social life.”

“I just worry that he’ll be hurt.”

“He might be a little hurt. But are you going to lie to him forever?”

“No,” agreed Will but he sounded petulant to his own ear so he said, “No, you’re right. And I’ve never been able to lie to his face so introducing you would go poorly if I tried to call you my boyfriend.”

The kitchen timer rang and Hannibal said, “That’s dinner. Would you like to make yourself comfortable in the dining room?”

“Is it okay with you if I watch you make up the plates? I find watching you cook to be fascinating.”

Hannibal smiled brightly, clearly liking the praise of his skills. “Of course, Will.” He started to cut up the rabbit and carefully arrange it on the plates.

“When I was little I used to watch my dad when he fixed boats and I felt the same way. I can’t believe that someone’s hands can be as skilled as yours are.”

“When did you learn boats?”

“When I was about ten. My dad wanted us to have a craft under our belt so that we would always be able to get work.”

“Yet your brother George chooses to rustle cattle.” Hannibal used forks deftly to move vegetables to the plates.

“Rustling cattle is easier and better paid if you don’t get caught. Boats are honest work and honest work always takes an effort. He’s just bad at not getting caught. But when he’s on a streak he can make fifteen grand in a week.”

“Fifteen thousand dollars?”

“Well, a cow can go for a thousand so he only needs to steal three a night. That’s easy for him.”

“That’s a skill in and of itself,” said Hannibal with a small smile as he started to drizzle sauce over the plates. He wiped the edges of the plate to make them absolutely perfect. “Dinner is served. Would you bring my wine glass through, please?”

“Of course,” Will picked up the glasses and followed Hannibal into the dining room. Hannibal set about lighting the candles. That made Will happy. If he was at a dinner party, of even a guest like Jack, those candles would have been lit long before he stepped into the room. It was nice to be behind the curtain with the other man, to be treated like something other than a guest. Maybe it was caused by days of Hannibal wearing his clothes after the snow storm or seeing each other before they’d brushed their teeth in the mornings. Whatever the cause, he liked being in the dining room without the lit candles.

When Will took his first bite he almost moaned, “I have never had roasted rabbit before. It’s delicious.”

“I imaging if the rabbits were shot with pellets you would want to cut them up to try and get it out.”

Nodding Will said, “We always had it pulled or in small cubes in stew.”

Hannibal asked him about the breathing exercises Mort had given him and listened with interest. “I’ve never prescribed breathing. I hope it works for you.”

“What do you prescribe?”

“Drugs and more talking. That’s why I would be a terrible doctor for you. Psychobabble is my forte.”

“Don’t disparage what you do. It’s not psychobabble; it’s very helpful to your patients. Talk therapy and drugs can work wonders. What you do is fantastic it just doesn’t work for me. I like Mort.”

“Excellent.”

They fell silent as they ate. Everything was amazing and Will let the flavors linger on his tongue. The tastes tangled in his mouth, the roasted meat and crispy roast vegetables mixed with the wine like a symphony. “Have you ever considered becoming a chef?”

“No, not even for a minute. The delight of cooking is watching people eat and enjoy it. If I was a chef I’d be in the kitchen not watching people savor it. There is no point to that. Pleasure is the point of cooking. There is none of the payoff if you stay in the kitchen. The food’s quality would suffer.” After they finished their meal Hannibal said, “Shall we have coffee before dessert?”

“I’m so full that’s the only way I’m going fit dessert.”

Hannibal took his plate but in the kitchen, as he moved to get things from the fridge, Will started to wash the dishes. “Will, you don’t need to do that,” said Hannibal.

“I don’t mind. You did all the cooking.”

“That’s very kind of you,” said Hannibal. “I’m not quite done cooking,” He said as he removed a dough from the fridge. He moved around rolling out the dough and a silicon baking sheet. After he rolled to the dough out very thinly and sliced it into triangles he placed the pieces of dough on the silicon and slid it into the oven.

Will washed the cooking utensils as Hannibal got the fancy coffee machine going he came to Will and started to dry what Will had washed. Will looked at Hannibal’s hand and asked, “Is it hard to be a surgeon with polydactyly?” Then he thought about it and said, “That was rude; I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine. I don’t mind talking about it. It is a completely functioning finger so it doesn’t get in my way. It’s actually better for holding instruments. Other students had to learn to properly handle their equipment; I never did and my friends credited my extra finger. Obviously you can’t get surgical gloves with six fingers but as it’s a middle finger I just always wore mine with my left ring and pinky finger in the same finger. The gloves stretch a lot. I had a few patients who didn’t want to be operated on by a six fingered man. Most people do not notice it as it’s not on my right hand.” He smiled and said, “When I was little I was mocked for it but it’s never bothered me. Even now some people shy away from my touch.”

“That’s awful,” said Will. “I’m so sorry.”

Hannibal shrugged, “They’re rude. I always comfort myself by remembering that rude people always get what is coming to them.”

“Do you believe that?” asked Will.

“I honestly do,” Hannibal said as he dried the last pan Will handed him. He moved back to the coffee machine. He poured out a couple of cups from the machine’s fancy carafe. The coffee was dark and frothy and light on the tongue. Hannibal sighed contentedly. “I only started drinking coffee after I moved to America for my residency at Johns Hopkins and I almost immediately found myself thinking that a dinner is not complete without a cup of coffee.”

Will laughed, “I had sort of the same experience. We never had extras growing up and coffee was an extra but when I got to college I had a complete meal plan. I could have whatever I wanted, as much as I wanted, whenever I wanted from the cafeterias on campus and I got addicted to the stuff.”

“That must have been quite a change.”

“Things had gotten easier for my dad by then. My three brothers had moved out. It’s just that we’d gotten used to being poor so he still wasn’t drinking coffee.”

Hannibal went to the freezer and removed two glass bowls, “Pomegranate mousse to top off our wintertime meal.”

“Wow, I didn’t even know you could make pomegranate mousse.”

Hannibal smiled and turned to remove the wafer-thin cookies from the oven. He quickly molded the still-warm triangles into cones. With his back turned to Will he said, “May I ask you a very personal question?”

“I just asked about your sixth finger; you can ask me anything.”

“I’ve heard the expression that the rich get rich and the poor get children but why did your parents have four children?”

“I don’t know why really poor people have a lot of kids. I honestly don’t. But my family wasn’t always too poor to afford kids. They got married right out of high school when my

mom was a bag girl at a supermarket and my dad was a gofer at the docks. Richy was born a respectable forty-three weeks after they got married, they had a little apartment and were fine. My mom worked hard and became the manager of the produce department. She made okay money. People started to notice my dad was really good at boats and he got employment instead of odd jobs. With her job and Daddy's they were okay. They had George and Alex and they were still fine, new shoes and coats when needed and a nice dinner on the table every night. She had a job where she got paid maternity leave. My father's mother used to take care of the boys during the day. My parents rented a little house that was halfway between the docks and the supermarket right by a bus station. She took the bus and he had a pickup. They weren't rich — they weren't going on vacation or buying name-brands — but they could manage and be happy and not worry about the bills come the fifteenth of the month. Then she died when she was having me. So that halved the money coming in and there was a new mouth to feed. My family went from being poor-but-fine to being dirt-poor and eligible for government assistance in a matter of minutes. My grandmother died a few months later and there went the free childcare on top of everything else. Daddy couldn't stay in New Orleans after that. He said the whole city made him sad for years."

Hannibal turned to him and there was sadness in his eyes, "I'm so sorry, Will."

Will shook his head, "I never knew it any other way. I always felt badly for my brothers. They lost their mother, lost their mostly comfortable life and all they got was a weird brother. It's like having your dog die and having it replaced by a picture of a fish… only worse. They didn't even want another brother; they all wanted a sister. And they got replaced in my father's heart. My dad always said I was the last gift my mother gave him and because of my medical problems I took up a lot of his attention. My brothers were always fighters and they used to pick on me a lot. I think that part of why they didn't like me was that they knew I was my dad's secret favorite but I think part of what made me my dad's favorite was that he felt badly for me: motherless, personality disorder and disliked by my own brothers. Their being mean because I was the favorite actually made me the favorite."

Hannibal blinked and said, "That actually makes me sadder: that it seemed so normal to you." He got a grater and grated chocolate onto the bowls of mousse.

"It was normal. Would it have been nicer to have more money or brothers who I connected with? Sure. But I had my dad, boats and stray dogs. I didn't need much else. I was quite a happy child." Then he added, "Stop looking so sad, Hannibal, I'm fine. My dad is fine. He has a nice house and all the coffee he wants. I have a place of my own, lovely dogs and a few great friends. Feel sad for my brothers: two losers and a man constantly seeking approval."

"Well, when you put it like that," Hannibal smiled. He poured them each a glass of ice water from a pitcher he got from the fridge and they moved to the counter where they had eaten the cheese. Will raised his spoon and clinked it against Hannibal's. "You have so few good manners," Hannibal said with a laugh.

"I have okay manners when I try really hard. Good manners are for polite situations. I know how you feel about etiquette but I hope we're beyond polite situations." Hannibal studied him for a moment and then clinked their spoons together again. "That's what I thought," said Will.

“Maybe I should try to forget manners every once in a while. It suits you very well.”

“You can forget your manners or keep them impeccable. I honestly don’t mind. Just be comfortable.”

“Then I think I’ll remember my manners.”

The mousse was soft and fluffy in Will’s mouth and the flavor of the fruit was almost overwhelming. “Hannibal, I don’t get how anyone can make food this good.”

“I’m glad you like it. Try the wafer.” It was crunchy, sweet and still warm. “You’re the only person I feel I can order around a plate.”

“I bow to your superior knowledge about my dessert.” Will felt Hannibal watching him as he ate. Will glanced at him and saw the way he was watching Will’s mouth. He thought of everything he knew about the world’s most proper, staid man who let Will’s dogs sit on his shoes, who ate melting ice cream and who always put up with Will’s weirdness. It was a risk but when he thought about it, it really wasn’t. “Am I lying to my father? I know I was before but am I lying now? It’s okay if you say I’m wrong. We’ll go back to enjoying dessert.”

Hannibal studied him and leaned forward and slowly pressed their lips together. Will sighed; it felt so nice to have Hannibal so close to him. He breathed in as Hannibal reached out and stroked his cheek. He licked Hannibal’s lips and the other man opened his mouth. He was sweet from the mousse and he moaned into Will’s mouth. Smiling he broke away and said, “My psychiatrist has been telling me to do that for quite some time.”

“Really?” asked Will.

“She thought that it would be easier than purposefully getting snowed in with you.”

Will laughed, “You did that on purpose?”

“I didn’t think about the power or that it would last so long. I thought it would be a nice way to spend the weekend.”

“You could have just said something.”

“It would have been easier.”

Will smiled at him, “It would have been awkward if you’d said I was totally wrong.”

“No, I would have apologized, we would have finished dessert and I would have steered our conversation on to safer topics.” He leaned forward and kissed Will sweetly. “But it wouldn’t have been this nice.” He bit Will’s lip gently and said, “So what happens now, Will?”

“I can’t stay. The dogs need to be let out.”

“I could follow you?” Hannibal offered.

Will thought about it and said, “Give me a ten minute head start. My bed sheets are probably covered in dog hair so I need to change them. And I’ll let the dogs out.”

Hannibal smiled, “Finish your dessert.” He carded his fingers through Will’s curls. “You don’t like touch. Am I upsetting you?”

Will leaned into the hand, “No, you’re fine. You’ve been fine for a long time.” He took another bite of the mousse and said, “This is amazing.”

“You’re hair is very soft.”

The strange thing about hating touch, Will had found through a life time of cringing away from physical contact, was that you actually became starved for it. He lost an interest in the food and instead turned his head to kiss the palm of Hannibal’s hand. “I don’t want dessert.”

“Your dogs need tending,” Hannibal brushed his hair away from his face. “I’ll pack a bag and be at your house a half hour after you.”

“I don’t have any condoms,” said Will, thinking aloud more than actually saying it.

“Okay, I’ll be at your house thirty-five minutes after you.”

Will nodded, “I’m really out of practice.”

“It’ll come back to you,” Hannibal promised. “Go, before I forget myself and the dogs end up wrecking your house.”

Will nodded again, “I’ll see you soon.”

He headed toward the door and Hannibal laughed, “You’re forgetting your coat.”

“Sorry, it’s been a long time,” Will shrugged into his coat. He walked down to his car and he could feel Hannibal’s eyes on him as he slid behind the wheel. He breathed out slowly as he turned the key in the transmission. This was actually happening. Then he started to worry: he was really bad at sex. It was a fact. He didn’t like men being behind him because he didn’t like the uncertainty of not being able to see what they were doing. He couldn’t make eye contact even when he was naked, even when he liked a person enough to be naked with them.

He dialed his dad’s number at a red light and set the phone to speaker. His dad picked up on the second ring saying, “Hey, honey, I wasn’t expecting to hear from you tonight. How was your new doctor?”

“I liked him, a lot, I think it could work. Daddy, I’ve been untruthful with you.”

His dad responded, “Are you okay?”

“When I mentioned Hannibal you were so excited that I had a boyfriend that I didn’t correct you. He was the psychiatrist the FBI brought in to clear me for field work.”

“Boy, you should always feel you can be honest with me,” his dad said slowly, “I’m sorry that you didn’t feel you could tell me the truth.”

“I know that you worry about me being alone and I’m usually really comfortable being alone but it made you so happy so I let you believe it. It didn’t really matter. And then he became my friend and it was really nice. I’ve never been good at friends and he really likes me. And then we started hanging out a lot and now I’m about to have sex for the first time in five years and I felt I needed to tell you the truth.”

“Are okay?” his dad repeated.

“Yeah. I wanted this. I want this.”

“Where are you? Tell me you’re not hiding in a bathroom.”

“No, I’m driving home. Hannibal is going to meet me there.”

“You’re on the phone while driving?”

“You’re on speaker phone.”

“Okay, what do you want me say? I’m at a loss.”

“You’re not angry about me for not being honest?”

“No, honey, I’m sorry you didn’t feel like you could correct me.”

“You were just so happy and it started as such a little omission.”

“Am I going to get to meet him when I come up?”

“As long as I don’t mess up too badly tonight.”

“You won’t.”

“I’m really bad in bed, I know I maybe shouldn’t tell my daddy that but it’s true. I could really screw this up.”

“He likes you. If you’re bad in bed he’ll forgive you.”

“You’re really underestimating how bad I am.”

“You’ll work it out. He cares for you. I could tell when I talked to him while you were sick. I talked to him four times and I liked him and he covered for you.”

“I only remember talking to you once.”

“Well, you had a really high fever and one time Hannibal said you were asleep and that he didn’t want to wake you. I liked him a lot.”

“Yeah,” agreed Will. “I should go. I’m getting to the country roads that aren’t as well lit and need more concentration.”

“Okay, I love you and I want to hear about your doctor when you get a chance.”

“I love you too. I’ll call you tomorrow after dinner, okay?”

“Sounds great, honey. And good luck tonight.”

“Thanks, Daddy.”

“Night, Will.”

“Night, Daddy.”

His phone went quite and he didn’t look at it but knew his dad had hung up. He had to pay attention to the winding roads which took up too much of his mind to freak out about Hannibal. At home Will dropped to his knees in inside his front door and cuddled his dogs. “Hi, beautifuls, hi, didja miss me?” he buried his face in Winston’s fur. “Good boys, go answer the call of the wild,” he said moving out of the way. They all rushed past him and he shut the door behind them. He quickly stripped the bed and put them and his laundry into the machine and turned it on. Then he remade the bed with clean sheets but turned down the covers because he really didn’t want to have sex on top of the duvet.

His house was clean, really clean, in preparation for his dad’s visit he’d scrubbed his whole house. But now h gave it a quick search, wanting to be sure there was no one hiding in a closet. He didn’t believe in the boogieman anymore but he did believe in really sick killers. Downstairs he made a cup of instant coffee, not wanting to make a whole pot for himself, and went out to watch the dogs play. They made him happy and calmed him down as he drank his coffee. They would never wander off and didn’t need to be watch so he went back inside. He washed his cup and then washed his face and brushed his teeth. He heard Calvin whine, low for a dog of his size, at the door and went to let him inside, drying his little muddy paws. He stood on his porch and watched them. As the car pulled down the drive he whistled and the dogs came to him. He dried their feet a Hannibal got out of his car. He was carrying an overnight bag and a suit bag.

“Hello,” said Hannibal, “any accidents?”

“No, but they were desperate to be let out. You’ll be pleased to know I talked to my dad. Told him I’d been lying and that I wasn’t really lying anymore.”

Hannibal laughed, “I’m glad.”

“Come in,” Will said, getting up from his crouch. He felt nervous walking into his own house but then Hannibal moved behind him and it didn’t make him panic, it felt nice as Hannibal’s hand snaked around him. He heard, rather than saw Hannibal hang his suit bag up on the coat rack.

He heard his front door shut and he heard Hannibal turning the lock as the man said, “So, is everything taken care of for the night? Can we go to bed?”

“Yeah,” agreed Will. He tugged Hannibal toward the bedroom, almost tripping over one of the dogs in the process.

Hannibal chuckled into his neck and then kissed his ear. “Careful: we don’t want to spend the night in the animal hospital.”

“I like that you know that any sex would be put off in favor of the dogs.”

“We couldn’t let them linger in pain.”

Will turned when they reached the bed, “You’re a really great person.” He pushed Hannibal’s coat off his shoulder as Hannibal dropped his bag. Will kissed him as he moved to Hannibal’s suit jacket. Breaking away from his mouth Will said, “You came knowing you were going to get laid. Why did you keep your suit on?”

“I prefer the phrases ‘have sex’ or ‘make love,’” Hannibal whispered into his ear as he slid his hands down the back of Will’s jeans. “Everything else sounds crass.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Will had to make a real effort not to tear the buttons off Hannibal’s waist jacket in his eagerness to see the other man naked. Hannibal squeezed his ass and pulled him closer so that their hips were aligned and Will moaned at the touch. “I wanted this so badly.” Will finally managed to expose his chest and kissed his shoulder. He had nice chest hair. Will had always admired chest hair. He’d always wanted to be a hairier person because it just another thing that made him look younger. And he liked men with chest hair because he liked masculinity. He’d never wanted to have sex with a woman. Not really, Alana was sweet and stable but he’d never considered what would happen if it got that far.

Hannibal smelled good and, as Will inhaled, he asked, “Hannibal, are you going to help me strip us?”

“No, I’m busy,” said Hannibal still groping Will’s ass and kissing his neck. “Beautiful man.”

Will laughed and quickly took his on shirt off. He didn’t really care if he lost a button. Then he sank to his knees forcing Hannibal to release his ass. He was always good at blowjobs. It was a sexual act he could be wholly in control of and so he’d mastered it. He unbuckled his belt and undid his button fly as he kissed Hannibal’s stomach. The man was ripped. Somehow the suits — and even the t-shirts he’d worn during the snow storm — had hidden tight, defined stomach muscles. He’d not thought about what Hannibal looked like naked. It had been his gentle hands, kind voice, soft looking hair and unending patience that had made Will want him. His cheekbones, straight nose, laugh lines and pretty, strange maroon eyes had been a perk. And his body was cream on the cake Will wanted to devour.

Hannibal settled his hands in Will’s hair and said, “Such pretty curls.”

Will smiled at him as he nuzzled his stomach and pushed his trousers down to reveal sexy black briefs that felt soft against Will’s cheek. “I wanted this,” he repeated a he stroked a

hand over Hannibal's erection through the material.

"I've been holding back for so long, Will."

As Will pulled down Hannibal's underwear he said, "Really? How long?" He looked up at Hannibal for a moment, actually making eye contact for a few moments as he stroked him to full hardness.

"Since you got sick and I learned from your father that we were supposedly dating. I started thinking about it, wondering why I wasn't already in bed with the sweetest person in the world. I put a high premium on cleverness and kindness."

Will smiled, "Well, thank God the sweetest person in the world was busy."

Hannibal laughed and then moaned, "Darling, good Will. Don't stop."

Will turned his full attention to the task, loving the feel of Hannibal in his hands. He sucked and licked kisses into the shaft before sliding Hannibal's erection into his mouth. The feel and taste of him was better than his food and Will groaned.

"You're very good at that," Hannibal panted and Will glanced up at him and gave him a smile with his eyes before going back to what he was doing. Hannibal's hands moved from his hair to his shoulders and Will liked that he hadn't tried to tug his hair or position Will's head. "Dear Will, so sweet." He stroked Will's cheek. And, after a few minutes of soft pants and groans, he said, "Stop, this is amazing, stop. I want you."

Will pulled back slowly and kissed Hannibal's hip. Hannibal tugged him up from his knees gently. Will kissed him slowly and finally Hannibal took part in the process of getting them naked and unbuckled Will's belt and pulled at his jeans. He pushed Will back into the bed. Will bounced as his back hit the mattress. Then Hannibal almost tripped over his pants and Will laughed.

"Maybe you're not the sweetest man in the world," Hannibal said with a half smile.

Will grinned and said, "If sex can't having laughing in it it's no fun. And don't call me the 'sweetest man in the world.' Five minutes ago I was the 'sweetest person in the world.' You're not allowed to downgrade the compliment now." He kicked off his shoes and wriggled out his pants and boxers, finally tugging off his socks. Hannibal managed to get himself naked without falling over. He turned to his bag and bent over giving Will a fantastic view of his ass. The only thing that could improve his ass would be Will's handprint. "Are you doing that on purpose?"

"Doing what?" asked Hannibal straightening up, holding a box of condoms and a bottle of lube.

"The suits don't do you any favors." He scooted back on the bed. Spreading his legs he said, "You're really gorgeous."

Hannibal settled between his legs, "You dress like a hobo."

Will laughed, “Yeah, I really do.” Hannibal leaned in to kiss him slowly. He slowly started to stroke him to hardness and Will moaned. They kissed gently and Will was actually enjoying the closeness for once. It wasn’t overwhelming and Will wasn’t panicking. He moved with Hannibal, stroking Hannibal’s back. The gel in Hannibal’s hair was relaxing and Will ran his fingers through it, messing it up, getting rid of the last stiffness and touching the soft strands. He rubbed against Hannibal and the man groaned.

Hannibal used one hand to stroke down between his legs and Will leaned up. It wasn’t a great angle and Will reached behind him for a pillow and handed it to Hannibal as he lifted his hips and Hannibal kissed his hip. “You smell amazing where you haven’t used that revolting cologne.” He nuzzled against Will’s groin. He stroked Will with his right hand as he slowly stretched Will with the slick fingers of his left hand. Will moaned and stroked Hannibal. “Smell amazing,” Hannibal repeated.

He took Will into his mouth and Will had to fight his instinct to buck up into Hannibal’s mouth. Because that would be rude— even for Will. Hannibal stretched him so slowly and it felt amazing, the slow burn of it. He ran his hands over Hannibal’s shoulders. There was a knot of stress in Hannibal’s left shoulder and Will slowly rubbed and massaged the muscle. Hannibal groaned around him and releasing Will from his mouth he said, “How can a man who hates touch be so good at that?”

“I massage my stab wound a lot. Good?”

“So many facets,” Hannibal kissed and sucked a trail up to his mouth. He kissed Will and Will let his eyes drift closed. He let his hands drift over Hannibal’s throat and he felt scar tissue. Opening his eyes he saw that it was a band low around his neck. It was almost invisible until you knew it was there.

“Are you okay?” he asked running his thumb over the scar.

“I’ve had that longer than you’ve been alive and it’s not a sexy memory. I’d really rather you didn’t do that right now.”

Will pulled his hands away from the scar, sliding one into Hannibal’s now floppy hair and one back to the knot in his shoulder, “Sorry.”

“No need to apologize, Will. You did nothing wrong,” Hannibal promised and croaked his fingers making Will jump against him. “You’re perfect.”

“Oh, God, Hannibal, I wanted this.” Hannibal moved back from him, sitting on his own heals and gently touched Will’s hip, clearly indicating that Will should turn onto his side but Will shook his head, “I want to see you,” he said. Because that sounded a lot better than saying, “I’m afraid I might freeze and have a panic attack because I’m afraid of having someone unseen behind me even in bed, even when it’s you.”

Hannibal nodded and kissed him again as Will groped for the condoms. Hannibal licked up his neck and said, “You’re delicious; you’ve sweated off that repugnant chemical.”

“It’s not that bad,” said Will as he found the box and pulled it open.

“It really is,” Hannibal said and took one of the condoms from him. Hannibal never fumbled as he opened the condom and slid it on. Will grabbed the lube and slicked up his right hand to stroke over the latex. “Will,” he moaned, “perfect.” He gently bit Will, right where his neck met his shoulder.

Will tangled his non-slippery hand in Hannibal’s soft hair. He kissed Hannibal slowly and said, “You’re beautiful, Hannibal.” The man gradually slid into him and Will arched his back at the pleasant intrusion. He sighed into Hannibal’s mouth, enjoying the feeling. He moved slowly against Hannibal, enjoying the feeling of skin on skin. He didn’t freeze, he wasn’t scared and he wasn’t panicking. It was still nice and he brought his legs up to close around Hannibal’s hips. He pulled the man impossibly closer and moaned, “You feel so good.”

Hannibal stroked his face and started to rock against Will and Will moved with him, enjoying the friction. Together they found their pace, languid and unhurried. Hannibal was solid muscles and his ass was rock hard as Will dragged the man deeper into him. And it was wonderful because nothing about it was frightening. It felt safe, comfortable almost like they were finally where they were always meant to be. It was natural and correct. Hannibal touched his chin to turn his face for a kiss. Hannibal played with his hair with one hand and stroked his erection with the other.

They made out as they moved together and Will reminded himself it was socially unacceptable to profess love for the first time while having sex. Instead he just kept kissing Hannibal and rolling with him. He came groaning into Hannibal’s mouth and was shaking as he kept moving with him and Hannibal moved his hand to guide Will’s hips, moving him the way he wanted and Will was just trying to catch his breath. He was gasping into Hannibal’s mouth.

Hannibal’s hair hung around Will’s face, damp with perspiration. Will didn’t focus on smell like Hannibal did but the room smelled of sex and clean sweat. Already feeling lassitude slipping over him — despite the amazing way Hannibal was touching him and the fact that they were still moving together — he knew that he would sleep well surrounded by the scent. Hannibal froze as he came, throwing his head back and revealing a length of skin for Will to kiss. Hannibal collapsed on top of him and said, “Give me a minute.” Will chuckled. “This is why I wanted to be next to you. I didn’t want to slump on top of you.”

Will laughed and stroked his hair, “Don’t worry: you feel good.” He slowly relaxed his legs and let himself melt into the mattress. “If you give me a few minutes I’ll get a wash cloth and clean us up.”

“Don’t bother. It can wait until the morning.”

“You’re usually so clean.”

“Yes, but right now we smell wonderful.” Hannibal nuzzled him before slowly detangling their limbs. He removed the condom and looked around. He stood and went to the garbage can by the door. “I’m going to turn off the lights. Do you want a glass of water?” Will shook his head and started to snuggle into the bed, pulling the sheets and duvet up. He heard Hannibal talking to the dogs and then the man was back, he held out a glass of water saying, “You didn’t take your pills.” Will sat up slowly and swallowed the pills.

“Thanks, I completely forgot.”

“Better things on your mind,” Hannibal said with a smile and took a sip of the water before putting it down on the bedside table. He slid into bed behind Will and tugged him back against him. “Are you okay?” he asked softly.

Will reached to turn out the bedside lamp and said, “I’m good.”

“You’re usually very uncomfortable with having people in your space.”

“Yeah, I’m also usually really bad at having sex.”

Will felt Hannibal smile into his neck, “I have a very hard time believing that.”

“I also have a panic attack and a possible meltdown when someone is behind me,” he entwined his fingers with Hannibal’s. He never liked touching someone after sex. He believed the purpose of big beds was so that everyone got their own space but he liked having his hand in Hannibal’s. Something about it felt safe and normal. Maybe his hand was just built to be held by six fingers. “Is your arm going to fall asleep?”

“No, I always sleep like this.” He kissed Will’s shoulder and said, “Will you sleep?”

Will made a slight noise of agreement, already mostly asleep, comfortable in his own skin.

End Notes

I know Mads Mikkelsen has five fingers and brown eyes but, even knowing that, in my head he is just a little closer to the book.

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